

Handling Salesmen by Letter



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FOREWORD

THE material embodied in this treatise was originally published as one of a series of special bulletins included in Volume Four of Dartnell Sales Manager's Reference Books for 1922.

In presenting these suggestions we wish to make it clear that we do not for a moment imagine that it is possible to formulate any set of rules or code of practices which will reduce the handling of men to the basis of a problem in arithmetic. We know only too well, that no two salesmen are temperamentally alike—that even the same man requires entirely different handling under certain conditions than he would under other conditions.

But we do believe that much can be learned from studying the methods of other successful sales managers. That is what this treatise endeavors to do. It brings to you in a few pages experience in handling salesmen that has cost other sales managers much time and money to acquire.

Acknowledgement is gratefully made to the 1,800 sales executives who participate in the Dartnell Monthly Sales Service for their generous contributions to this material.

TEN "DON'TS" WHEN WRITING SALESMEN

- 1 Don't pick on them. If you must write unpleasantly put it all into one letter.
- 2 Try to make the letter that your men will read Monday morning as cheery and helpful as possible. Give them a running start for a big week.
- 3 Don't preach at your men. Teach as though you taught not.
- 4 Don't write unnecessary letters about trivial things and ask salesmen to answer them.
- 5 Don't be forever talking about what some other salesman did or is doing. It's just like talking about pies mother used to make.
- 6 Insist that every letter going to salesmen should pass over your desk. Otherwise some sour bookkeeper will send a man a letter which will put him off his feed for a week.
- 7 Don't be forever telling your boys what you used to do when you were a salesman. They don't give a damn.
- 8 Praise for doing something well is usually more effective than bawling a man out for doing something wrong. This is especially true in correcting faults.
- 9 Don't write white blooded letters to red blooded salesmen. Put some pep and vinegar in them. Write to a man as though he sat across from you at lunch.
- 10 And whatever else you do don't write when you are mad. Madness is a mild form of insanity. If you write at white heat you will surely regret it. Give your anger a chance to cool.

I—The Knack of Handling Salesmen by Letter

IT is quite usual when sales managers get together for them to talk about “handling” this or that man. While it is true that salesmen must be “handled” in one sense, it is also true that there is nothing which will wreck a sales force quicker than a sales manager who prides himself on his cleverness in handling and using men as mere pawns in the bigger game of getting the order.

The first rule in successfully handling men might well be “don’t handle them.” Forget that you are their task master and think of them as brothers or sons, according to your personality. If you are a sales manager of the younger school don’t make the fatal mistake of setting yourself up on a pedestal and talking down to your men. Rather assume that your salesmen are partners in an undertaking of mutual profit. Make your appeal to the team instinct, the same instinct that makes a winning football or baseball team, the willingness to sacrifice personal glory for the good of the cause.

If you are older than your men, and have a longer experience back of you, then your attitude should be more fatherly. You are entitled to respect, just as a head of a family is entitled to respect, and you should assume that you are entitled to it. The very fact that you show in your letters that you expect respect will automatically assure you of it, provided you maintain your prestige and do not become too familiar. Indeed, sales managers both young and old, will find it much more satisfactory to maintain a slight reserve in their correspondence with salesmen. The old saying that “familiarity breeds contempt” is only too true. There are

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some salesmen with whom you can become very intimate and who will be just as good, even better salesmen. But these few are the exceptions, and unless you are very sure of your man it is better to maintain a certain dignity in your letters to him which will serve as a barrier against the man thinking: "Well, the boss and I are as thick as pea soup. I can fix it with him easily enough."

For the same reason it is not always well in writing salesmen to express yourself in such a way that the salesman will get the impression you are on the defensive. This does not mean that a sales manager can afford to be haughty and over-bearing in his correspondence, but there is a tendency among certain sales managers to be constantly explaining and reasoning with their men. A little of this will do no harm, but over-done it has a bad effect on morale.

II—Making Men Like You

THERE are four things that enter into the successful managing of a sales force outside of the ability that comes from experience. The first and most important of these is what the men call "getting a square deal." Make your men understand thoroughly that you play no favorites. Conduct yourself so that they will think of you as being absolutely fair and impartial, ever willing to put your personal interests aside for theirs. Your letters to your men must reflect such a willingness.

Secondly, don't try to play the role of the school teacher. It is only too true that sales managing is largely sales educating, but men react against having knowledge of any kind crammed down their throats. There are times when such a course is necessary, but as a general rule all your teachings must be as though you taught not, and your men should be told things unknown as though they were things forgot, if we may paraphrase an exceptionally trite bit of philosophy.

One successful sales manager, a man who is now at the head of a great business enterprise of his own, purposely used loose English in letters to salesmen for fear they might get the impression he thought himself better than they. The same sales manager used to get out a paper called "The Gimlet," using the pen name "Mike Kinney, Teamster." The reason he let Mike do the talking was because he felt that people liked to be talked up to, whereas they resented being talked down to. "Mike," the teamster, could talk up to the business men who read "The Gimlet," but Saunders Norvell, president of the Norvell-Shapleigh Hardware Company, could not very well come out of his "character" to do so.

There are sales managers who make the mistake of writing too many trivial letters to their men. They write on the

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least provocation, and invariably end up with some such expression as: "I feel sure that if you will call on Mr. Jones, you can get a nice order." Or, "Mr. Jones is as good as sold, drop in on him when you are in Podunk and get his order." It is most likely the sales manager wrote this thoughtlessly, without considering the effect it would have on the salesman. But such letters tend to peeve a salesman. Leave some credit for him. It is often better to dash off a few penciled lines on a piece of scratch paper, or to make some original notes on the original inquiry. Even the best of things can be over-done. This is especially true in writing routine letters to salesmen.

The fourth and last rule for making men like you is the knack of writing a human, friendly, man-to-man letter. It is strange, but true, that so many sales managers who are human dynamos when it comes to personal selling write the most inhuman letters. The letters don't reflect personality any more than a dog's bark sounds like a dove's cooing. They are cold, stilted and jerky. They are filled with stereotyped, cut-and-dried expressions, robbing them of all individuality, and ruining them so far as a friendship making proposition is concerned. One of the rarest gifts that a man can have in business, and fortunately it is a gift that can be developed with practice, is the ability to put yourself into an envelope and seal the flap after you. This trait above all others is the trait that draws men to you, and causes them to feel just a little more kindly toward you every time they get your letters. It is just such letters that men like to get and truly appreciate. They are the kind of letters that lay the foundation upon which all depends when it comes to handling salesmen by letter .

III—The Self-Satisfied Salesman

AFTER a man has reached a point where he begins to think that he is one of the fixtures in the organization, and feels that he is a man over whom the company would think a long time before replacing, his effectiveness begins to fade. He makes fewer calls. He falls into the habit of "sizing up" prospects. He knows, without inquiring, why this or that concern would not be interested. In fact he only utilizes about one-half, probably not even half, of his potential business-getting ability. It is a nice problem of sales management to develop the other fifty per cent of his potential ability to sell so that he will be producing at maximum capacity, both for himself and for the house.

There are numerous ways, of course, for handling this type of salesman. The most common way is to "tell him a few things." Quite often that in itself is effective, but too often it breaks down a man's morale, and in some cases even ruins him. Then, too, it is not a lasting cure. For a month or two perhaps the salesman will hit on six cylinders, then he will drop back to three again. A better plan is to use indirect illustrations. Salesmen become self-satisfied from thinking too much about past performances. The more they are allowed to think about what they have done in the past, the less they will think about what they are going to do tomorrow. So your task is to change a man's direction of thought. Instead of allowing him to think backwards get him to think forwards. Instead of letting him dwell on the business he is getting, keep continually reminding him about the business he should have but is not getting.

One sales manager had a salesman who thought he was about the slickest article that ever carried a sample case. What he didn't know about selling wasn't worth knowing. He

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was a typical male. Yet, all in all it wasn't hurtful that he should have a touch of ego, for a man without self-confidence is a poor type of salesman, but too much is worse than none at all. The sales manager solved the problem by sending just enough letters to prospects in the salesman's territory to keep a flow of inquiries coming in. These inquiries he would forward to the salesman, and insist that the salesman follow them up and give him a full report. This was all in addition to calling on the regular trade. In a month or two the sales manager began to notice that the salesman was getting out and hitting the ball harder than he used to. Most likely he had come to realize that he was not covering his territory very thoroughly, and he had sense enough to know that if he did not, with inquiries coming in at the rate they were, either one of two things would happen — the territory would be divided with another salesman or he would be out looking for another job.

IV—The Salesman Who Thinks He Knows Better

THIS type is epidemic in long established sales organizations. A newly appointed sales manager usually inherits a few that cause him no little anxiety before he finally gets them smoothed out. As a rule they are men who are good producers and whom it would not be wise to discharge. It is largely a matter of demonstrating to salesmen of this type that your way is the best way. Whenever possible go out into their territory with them and sell circles around them. Particularly take prospects which they have turned in as being no good, and sell them. Such tactics seldom fail of results.

If you cannot do this the next best thing is to take some young salesman who has had much less experience, perhaps, than the "old timers" and carefully coach him. Then help this newcomer in the organization to stage a special drive that will produce a lot of immediate business. From the showing which the young man will naturally make write a general letter—it is well not to make it too personal for fear of arousing the old timer's animosity—along the lines of "what this youngster has done you can double." If the old timer has any red blood whatever in his veins this method of treatment will convince him that his way wasn't nearly as good as he thought it was, and to save his laurels he will have to get out and fight for business. In doing so he will consciously or unconsciously use the tactics which proved effective for the younger man, but he will change them slightly to fit his personality. More than likely he will close considerable business. If he does, be careful how you write him. If you allow an "I-told-you-so" tone to creep into your letter the effect of your work will be lost. To hold your gain you must

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let your man think it was his own clever salesmanship and sales generalship that turned the trick, and he will not only continue to use the plan (he thinks it is his own baby) but will think the more of you because you are smart enough to realize what a wonder he is as a salesman.

You often hear sales managers complain that such-and-such a salesman is hard to "handle" because his head is too big for his hat, etc. No man is hard to handle if you will only study him thoughtfully. Egotistical people are the easiest of all to handle if you use their egotism as a lever. The trouble comes when you try to handle the egotist the same as you would the chap who thinks everything you do or say is 100 per cent. That is as bad as taking mange cure for a cold.

V—The Man Who Won't Send in Reports

IT is the biggest mistake in the world to keep picking on a salesman because he won't report his calls. It must be remembered that good salesmen usually make poor office clerks. The average salesman is just about as enthusiastic about making out reports as you would be about punching a time clock. In fact he regards reports as a sort of portable time clock.

As a matter of fact reports are the very best advertising device at a salesman's disposal. There are innumerable illustrations available of where a salesman by means of his daily report has been able to correct his shortcomings and more fully capitalize his strong points. No business man would think of attempting to conduct a business without keeping some sort of daily report of results accomplished so that he could at stated periods take stock of his progress or lack of progress. Yet how many salesmen are content to dub along year in and year out getting nowhere. Why? Because they do not analyze their work. They do not try to find out why they fell down in this sale, or why they were able to make that sale. They just keep stumbling along, muddling through. Is it any wonder that only one salesman out of every twenty-five ever becomes a sales manager? Is it any wonder there are a hundred salesmen making thirty dollars a week for every one making fifty?

If you can give your salesmen this vision of self-development, of growing through self-analysis, which is the only real reason for having reports, your problem will vanish into thin air. There are few salesmen who are so hopelessly in

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a rut that they don't want to grow. All the others will welcome an opportunity to keep books on themselves.

It should be kept in mind, however, that a salesman values his reports in exact proportion to the valuation you, yourself, put upon them. This being so it is well to keep a daily record of reports received from each man, and if each day's report is not promptly received mention the fact to him in your next letter. If he persists in forgetting point out to him that he is the loser, not the house. An excellent way to keep track of reports is to rule up a sheet of paper into thirty-one vertical columns, and number them one to thirty-one, omitting Sundays and holidays. Then cross rule as many horizontal columns as you have salesmen. List the salesman's name in a wide column to the left of sheet, and then as each salesman sends in his report put a cross in column for that date opposite his name. In this way you can see at a glance just how each salesman stands on the report question.

VI—The Salesman Who Dissipates His Time

IT has been stated, with some truth, that the average salesman works only two hours a day. That is to say, out of the usual eight hour day, only one-quarter of it is spent face to face with the buyer actually selling goods. As a matter of fact a salesman is working whenever he is thinking about selling, and in fairness to the salesman it should be stated that many of them not only think about their problems all day long, but carry them home at night. Nevertheless, you will find salesmen in every organization who could accomplish a great deal more if they systematized their work.

There are salesmen, and their number includes some of the best in the business, who crisscross back and forth, making a call in one part of their territory and then doubling back to make another call in some other part of their territory. Merely wasting one hour a day in this way means a loss of three hundred hours a year. If that lost time could be employed in the presence of buyers actually selling goods, it would mean about twenty-five per cent added effectiveness.

If you have men on your sales force who are dissipating their time on street cars or on trains, and in zigzagging from one buyer to another, doubling back on their territories, it will pay you to send these men a special series of letters. We all use the follow-up letter idea for selling our product to buyers, but we seldom stop to think of using it for selling an idea to a salesman. Yet where we stand to make a dollar by educating a buyer, we stand to make a hundred dollars through educating a salesman.

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Such a campaign might consist of five letters which could be used over and over again whenever indications point to a salesman working his territory unsystematically.

Letter No. 1 should visualize to the salesman the loss of effectiveness when he wastes one-quarter of his available time, out of the heart of the day, in non-productive effort.

Letter No. 2. should show him how by devoting thirty minutes every evening to mapping out a plan for the next day's work he can turn this lost effort to advantage.

Letter No. 3 should show him how to lay out a plan, the method of charting his calls on a map of the town or city in which he is working, and then arranging his call cards so that he can go up one street and down the next.

Letter No. 4 should cite several instances of where salesmen who have worked their territory in a haphazard fashion have been able to increase their earnings by going after business systematically.

Letter No. 5 should be a letter of congratulations which will go out to a man as soon as it is evident the previous letters are taking effect and that he is planning his work and then working his plan. This last letter should lay special emphasis on the need of sticking to his plan regardless of the temptation which he is sure to feel to deviate from it if things don't seem to be breaking well with him.

VII—The Man Who Is Just Plain Lazy

AS a general rule when you come to the conclusion that a man has a lazy streak in his make-up it is well to replace him at the first opportunity. But before doing so consider that we are all naturally lazy; that it is a perfectly human failing. Left to his natural inclinations a man only works hard enough to provide himself and his family with common necessities. In the lower strata of civilization this condition prevails. The reason that civilized man puts forth more effort than is required to provide the bare necessities of life is his pride. He wants to have more money than the next man so that he can buy better clothes, drive a better automobile, own a better home.

There are other motives, such as we find in men who work for love of their country or love of humanity, but in business the great controlling motive is that perfectly human desire to get to the top of the ladder. Consequently in writing letters designed to move a lazy man to greater effort we must assume that his indifference to greater achievement is lack of desire to outdo his fellow men. We must plant that germ in him, and keep it nourished. By increasing his wants, we can as a rule automatically increase his efforts.

The pure love of winning, inherent in every man, can be capitalized in letters to lackadaisical salesmen. Assume in your letters that the salesman is a tail-ender and you would not expect him to do as well as so-and-so in the organization who is a real go-getter. Make him so mad that he says to himself: "I'll show that son-of-a-sea-cook if I'm not as good a salesman as he has in the organization. I am getting fed up on this 'poor little Willie' stuff."

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One clever sales manager planted the desire to make more money in the heart of a man whom he was about ready to discharge, by getting one of his other salesmen who owned a beautiful home in the country to invite the lazy salesman and his wife to dinner. When the lazy man's wife saw the home that other salesman, who she was positive was not half as clever as her husband, had built out of his commissions she became dissatisfied and prodded her husband until his business almost trebled within one year.

Lazy salesmen are usually shiftless. They spend their money almost as fast, sometimes even faster, than they make it. Quite often by getting a man of this type interested in some plan for saving money you can develop him along the desired lines. There is nothing to equal the saving habit and a growing bank account to keep a salesman's nose to the grind stone, unless it is a flock of youngsters.

In considering this matter of the lazy salesman it is well to bear in mind that there is no such a thing as a man who won't work if the motive for work is supplied. If you doubt this all you have to do is to look at the records of the A. E. F. Here we find men, the same kind of men who compose your sales organization, who cheerfully worked like Trojans if required twenty-four hours a day for what? For the sheer determination to win. This will to win is the greatest thing that is in us. Fortunate indeed is the sales manager who can resurrect that spirit in the heart of a salesman who doesn't care much whether school keeps or not.

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VIII—When a Salesman Plays in Hard Luck

NO sales manager will admit that there is such a thing as "luck" in selling goods. He is not inclined to sympathize with the salesman who comes to him with any hard luck story, and he is pretty apt to remind the man that if he had his way about it he would spell luck with a "p" before the "l." But down in his heart he knows that there are times when the pluckiest salesman simply cannot get business, and even though he works harder than ever, and makes more calls than ever, the elusive orders are not forthcoming.

When you are convinced that a man is really trying his hardest and that his lack of success is not due to any fault of his own it is a big mistake to ride him for business and it is equally wrong to sympathize with him. In the first case you will probably crumble what little resistance he has left and he will blow up entirely, and in the second case you will verify his own impressions that there is no business to be had, and make him feel all the more that there is no use in trying to fish when the fish are not biting.

A plan used by one notably successful sales manager when this condition develops in his sales organization, is to keep feeding the men special letters giving them concrete suggestions for going after business. Sometimes it might be a letter to the man suggesting that he leave the city territory where conditions have been hard and go out into the country where the resistance is less pronounced, and the buyers easier to see. Or it might be a letter advising the salesman what kinds of business can best be sold under existing conditions, or a few suggestions taken from the recent report of a salesman getting business in spite of conditions.

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In such letters it is very important to always assume that the business is there. Point out that people are still getting married, still spending 20 per cent of their income for rent, 50 per cent for food, and whatever it may be for the thing you are selling. Explain that there is no reason to believe that men have suddenly stopped buying.

Also make it clear that the law of sales to calls is still working, and while the number of sales that follow a given number of calls may be a bit higher or a bit lower from time to time, it still follows that a salesman who makes a certain number of intelligent calls will get a certain number of orders. That is the big thing—to keep him out making calls. If you can do that sooner or later he will break the spell, for after all our success in getting orders lies more in ourselves than outside of ourselves.

IX—The Salesman Whose Account Is Over-Drawn

MUCH of the trouble experienced with salesmen whose drawing account runs away from their sales could be eliminated at the beginning. Too often the salesman gets the impression that the drawing account is a sort of guarantee. Feeling this way he takes it for granted that in the event of his leaving your employ you will wipe the slate clean and call it even. Naturally he does not worry about the debt which is piling up against him on the books.

Sales managers who have exceptionally good fortune in keeping down losses through bad drawing account credits report they always make it clear to a salesman at the time he is employed that all advances to him are only loans. Impress upon him that it is the same as though he were starting in business for himself and borrowed some working capital from a banker to tide him over until he could begin to collect on his sales. In this case if the salesman failed to sell enough goods to repay the loan, and was forced to wind up his business, he would expect to repay the banker—in fact the banker would require him to sign notes and would force collection at the first opportunity. You do not require the salesman to sign any notes, but you certainly do expect him to consider such advances as you will make to pay his living expenses as a personal loan and repay it in the event of failure.

If the salesman is given this impression at the outset, and in the letters which pass while he is making good, you refer to his debt as the money already loaned him it will make a great deal of difference in his determination to fight the thing through. One of the large insurance companies has

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found that a man who is down and out, with a family to feed, will invariably get business where a less determined and less decided man might fail. Of course, there is such a thing as making a man too anxious to get the order, and there are times when it is poor tactics to make a man desperate. But in most cases the iron hand within the velvet glove will have the greatest effect on the salesman who is sliding behind and doesn't seem to worry much about it.

Little is to be gained by nagging a man who is sliding behind. In most cases he feels his lack of business far more keenly than you do. He thinks about it all his waking hours. You think about it only once in a while. So don't pick on the man, and write him letters about being disappointed to note that his account is steadily getting worse. Decide in your own mind just how much you will risk on him. If he keeps falling behind, find out why. If it can be corrected go the limit in an endeavor to put the man on his feet. If it cannot be corrected then the sooner you break off the connection the better for you, for the house and for the salesman. But when you decide to behead a man do it quickly, don't hack it off by degrees.

X—The Extravagant Salesman

A SALESMAN who spends his money recklessly usually spends the house's money in the same open-handed fashion. In recently analyzing the records of one concern traveling fifty salesmen, it was found that out of the fifty men ten per cent traveled on \$8 a day; thirty per cent averaged over \$9 and sixty per cent averaged \$10 or better. These figures were taken over a year's period, and as the company divided its territory carefully, theoretically each man ought to have been able to operate on about the same over-head. Yet the salesman who sold the most invariably were those with the lowest average operating expense. This analysis suggests that the best salesmen are usually the best managers, and refutes the claim sometimes advanced as an apology for an excessive expense account that it doesn't matter what the expenses are so long as the business is forthcoming. The fact is that there is little relation between a man's personal selling expense and his volume of business.

At this time when the need of keeping selling expense down to the very bone is so urgent sales managers should earnestly attempt to promote the economy spirit among the salesmen, and this can be done most effectively by an occasional letter complimenting a salesman on a particularly creditable expense account. It is much better to approach this problem from a positive point of view, than it is to berate a man for spending a few dollars more than he should. This practice is a relic of the dark ages of sales management when the sales manager's job was "auditing" expense accounts. In those days the expense account was usually referred to as the salesman's swindle sheet. A salesman figured his pay as salary plus what he could "save" on his expense allowance (allowance meaning, of course, what he could get away with).

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As a matter of fact much of the padding of expense accounts is not padding at all, but an attempt on the part of the salesman to come out even with his expense money. There are innumerable conscientious salesmen who go down into their own pockets month after month, rather than to put down items on their expense account which might give the impression of padding. No concern expects a salesman to pay his expenses out of his own pocket. But every concern expects a salesman to spend the house's money just as carefully as he spends his own. Further than that it expects him to keep his operating costs down, just as it expects the sales manager to keep down the cost of selling for the whole business. And when a salesman evidences an endeavor to do this, he should be complimented and encouraged to repeat. In handling this matter of expense accounts you can catch a great many more nickels with molasses than you can with vinegar.

XI—He Puts the Customer's Interests First

DURING the seller's market, now passed, sales executives had little to complain of so far as salesmen currying favor with customers was concerned. But now even the best men are guilty. The steadily tightening competition makes the salesman very anxious, too anxious perhaps, to please his customers. When a customer suggests that he would like a better discount, or that he would like to return this or that, or do something else which the salesman knows perfectly well is contrary to the policy of his company, the chances are he will say: "I'll see what I can do for you." Then he prepares his brief, making out the very best possible case, to convince the house that by letting the bars down "just this one time" it will enable him to hold an account which he might otherwise lose. Too often the house listens to his plea and gives in just this once, only to find that as is so often the case one sin begets another, and the first thing you know the whole fabric of your house policy breaks down.

Unless you are willing to go back to the bazaar kind of salesmanship it is important to impress upon your men when you find them inclined to ask for special consideration for this or that customer that you are a one-price, one-policy house. Sell them on what it means to them to work for that kind of house. It is very probable that the customer who is asking for the special price or special terms prides himself on his one price policy. Even if he does not, he would hardly admit that he had different prices for different customers. The salesman should be coached to meet any requests for a special price by telling the customer firmly and frankly that

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he works for the same kind of house that he imagines the man he is selling represents. He, the salesman, would not think for a minute of coming into this buyer's place of business and asking him to sell him a ten dollar article for two dollars less. He knows without asking that the man he is talking to would not for a minute be so unfair to his other customers who in good faith paid him the price asked without quibbling. In other words a salesman should fight back with the same weapons the buyer hands him.

A firm, determined stand increases the respect that the customer has for the salesman and for the house he represents and even though he might lose this particular order, in the long run he will profit by the reputation he will establish in his territory for being a square-deal salesman. The moment a salesman hesitates when asked for a special discount it weakens him just so much, and the outstanding reaction in the buyer's mind is that perhaps after all the house has an inside set of prices, and that if he had tried before for a special discount he could have had it all the while he was paying the full price.

XII—The Easily Discouraged Salesman

A WELL known sales manager rates a salesman according to the number of lickings he can take without showing the yellow. He finds that he has some men who can go out and work for days at a time, getting one turn down after another, getting thrown out the front door in one place and smiled out of the private office in another, without "blowing up." There are others who will go to pieces at the end of a few days. And the great majority are good for only about ten consecutive turn-downs before they cave in. It is important that every sales manager should know just how many orderless days each of his salesmen will stand without losing his punch. Having ascertained this, plan your letters accordingly.

Quite often you can put the fight back in a man by sending him some inspirational literature of one kind or another. Kipling's "If," printed on page 30, is an excellent thing to put into the hands of a man who is discouraged and in danger of going to pieces. It seems to have the appeal that stiffens his back-bone, and starts the red blood flowing once more through his veins. It makes him take a firmer grip on himself, and ask himself of what sort of stuff he is made anyway.

One very successful sales manager has a form letter which a typist writes to lists of names in territories where the salesmen are not yet hardened to the discouragements of sales work. These letters bring back leads. The sales manager finds that by sending a salesman occasional leads prevents him from going too long without an order.

IF—

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowances for their doubting too:
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;
If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same:
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it one one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss:
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve you long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much:
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling

XIII—The Salesman Who Nests on China Eggs

IN selling products like office equipment, automobiles, store appliances, special services, life insurance, stocks and bonds and those sold on what is sometimes called a one-sale plan, it is very important to impress upon the salesman that they must make a certain number of "lead" calls every day. If they do not keep adding new prospects to their list they will soon be devoting too much time to call-backs that never materialize. As time goes on the live call-backs are gradually closed up, and the least live remain until eventually a salesman will be spending two-thirds of his day trying to hatch out nest eggs, as one sales manager puts it.

The financial depression has greatly accentuated this problem of late. It is easy for a salesman to convince a man that he needs the thing which he is selling. But it is not always possible for the man to spend the money, no matter how well he has been sold. So, caught between the two desires—to have the thing and still retain the money, he "stalls" the salesman along. The more he stalls, the farther the salesman usually gets from making the sale. This is especially true when the salesman assumes the prospect is sold, and makes no further effort to sell him or even keep his enthusiasm warm on his follow-up calls.

When a salesman's daily reports begin to show too high a percentage of call-backs, it is well to suggest a "call" quota of some kind. This plan is used by some of the insurance companies with very good results. Start with the total number of calls which a salesman in the particular territory involved should be able to make. Say for example you decide on ten a

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day—some make as high as thirty. Out of these ten, four ought to be missionary or cold canvass calls for the purpose of adding new prospects if an actual order cannot be secured. Two ought to be “closing” appointments, one of which should result in an actual sale, and the other four could be follow-up calls on prospects who have expressed interest but for one reason or another would not buy at the moment. This quota, in selling life insurance, has been found to yield on an average of one order a day, which is a fair batting average in selling a “not wanted” product. This quota would vary, of course, where the product was advertised and the salesman was expected to make a lot of calls on advertising inquiries. But the important thing is that it constantly keeps in front of a man the necessity of making new calls, of constantly widening his prospect list, and not letting it go to seed.

At periodical intervals it is often times wise to totally discard a list of call backs and start in all over again. One of the biggest security houses in the country built up its business by insisting that its salesmen never make more than two calls on any one man. The salesman uses this fixed policy as a club in getting immediate action. He frankly tells his prospect that this will be the last time he will be allowed to call. If the prospect wants to see him again he will have to call him up on the phone. The so-called “one-call and qualification” system of selling is an outgrowth of the discovery made by Sargent that more business could be secured by a force of salesmen working only new prospects, than when most of a man’s effort was given to warming over cold prospects.

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XIV—Too Big to Sell Small Orders

THIS type of salesman is a hand-me-down from the war boom period when big orders were the rule. Some salesmen find it hard to adjust themselves to operating on a falling market in which small orders are the rule and large orders the exception; when dealers and buyers of all kinds are operating on a hand-to-mouth basis, and when it requires three times as many orders to make up an equal volume as it did two years back. When you find a man who won't adjust himself to selling under existing conditions and who thinks he is too big to work on little orders, he should be subjected to a special series of letters. If that doesn't do the trick it may be well to encourage him to put out a junior salesman who has not such an exaggerated idea of his importance, letting the salesman pay the junior's salary. Quite often if you give the salesman the choice between getting the small orders himself or hiring someone else to get them, good results can be secured.

An effective plan for impressing the importance of small orders upon salesmen is to make an analysis of your ledger accounts and use them as a basis of several letters. These letters will develop the idea in the salesman's mind that the big customer started as a small customer, and so it must follow that it is from the small customers of today that his big customers of tomorrow will come. If you take about a dozen accounts, which started in with you on a small scale and show by years how their purchases have grown it will give the salesman a new vision of the importance of distributing business among the greatest possible number of good-will units in his territory.

XV—Handling the Big “I” Salesman

HE is one of those fellows who never thinks of talking about “we” but it is always “I will do thus and so,” “I will take care of you,” “When you give your order to me,” etc. He works on the theory that his success lies in making his buyer like him—possibly back in his head lies the undefined idea of getting his trade so well “sewed up” that if he should ever leave the company he could take it with him. It is not easy to handle this type of citizen, and it is especially difficult to do so through letters. But somehow or other he must be made to see that the biggest thing he is selling is not himself, nor the house, but the product itself and most especially what that product will do for the man who is buying it.

A salesman who attempts to build up his trade on a purely personal basis, and get business on the strength of his friendship is treading on the thinnest of thin ice, for the least friction that arises will undermine that friendship and remove the main reason for securing that man’s business. The best way to get him to understand this is to prepare form letters which can be copied by a typist and sent out occasionally to the man’s customers. Utilize such occasions as the receipt of a good sized order, or the failure to send in any at all, as excuses for writing the customer.

One wily sales manager cured a man who was inclined to lean too heavily on the perpendicular pronoun by plotting with a customer in the salesman’s territory, to give the offender a heart-to-heart talk. When the dealer got through with the salesman he was cured forever of the “Great I am” habit.

XVI—The Discontented Salesman

DISCONTENT in a man's make up is a trait which can be turned to excellent advantage, and is in no sense the failing that it is generally supposed to be. It is far better to have a man dissatisfied with things as they are than to have him self-satisfied and in a rut. A discontented salesman at least is ambitious, that gives you the handle with which to take hold of the situation.

There is a distinction between the discontent felt by a salaried worker and that felt by a worker who shares in the profits of his work, regardless of whether such profits take the form of commissions or a bonus or stock holdings. A salaried worker becomes disgruntled with the management as a rule and he is more resentful. A salesman picks on his territory. If he is not making as much money as he would like to make he immediately begins to think how much more he could make if he had twice as much territory. You see, he measures his earnings by the number of square miles in his territory as a rule. There are still a lot of salesmen whose dream of heaven is a territory which covers the whole United States and most of Canada. One of the best plans to convince a salesman who is discontented about his territory that what he really wants is less instead of more square miles to cover, is to analyze it county by county and show him exactly just how much business he can get without going outside of two or three counties in a territory of seven or eight.

For example, such figures would prove to a salesman whose territory comprised Cook County, Illinois, that it was as large from the standpoint of opportunity as seven or eight Western States.

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It has been said that any man who will continue placidly in one position for over five years without asking what the future holds for him is a parasite and dead wood that should be weeded out of the organization. Such a man has stopped growing. No business can grow faster than the men who make it grow.

So when a man wants to know about his future take it as a natural expression rather than an indication of discontent. When you write an answer to his letter show him by actual figures, whenever possible, how the business has grown over a period of years. If you cannot hold out any definite promise of advancement at that time you can at least show him that even though it may seem to him that he is standing still, he is in reality being carried forward with the business. He is like the father who cannot see his son's growth day by day, but when he looks at the baby photograph he is brought face to face with a fact that otherwise would not be realized. Some sales managers, who handle their men by letter, use a small graph chart on which they trace the growth of the business by years. This is enclosed with the letter to be returned by the salesman after he has studied it. Such a chart would, of course, be treated as a very confidential document.

Even such notably successful sales organizations as the National Cash Register Company attach great importance to keeping their salesmen sold, even though many of their salesmen are making upwards of \$15,000 a year. A red-blooded salesman is never satisfied, no matter how much he makes. It is the sales manager's task to keep him sold on the future. You ought to have heard the salesmen applaud when President Patterson said at the last convention: "We have only scratched the surface. Think where we will be in another twenty-five years."

XVII—The Salesman Who Thinks He Is Underpaid

WE read and hear a great deal about business interests liquidating. Those of us who are stockholders are even more keenly aware of the great period of deflation. But how many of us stop to think that people are going through the same thing. They, too, find it hard to take smaller earnings, and go back to old standards of living. It is not surprising that they raise their voices against so doing, nor is it surprising that salesmen, especially those who have the big money habit, should feel a bit discontented at their present small earnings when they are still living up to 1920 standards.

If a salesman should give you any inkling of discontent over the earnings question, it might be well to confront him with figures regarding the increased purchasing power of the dollar. Just at present it has a purchasing power of somewhere in the neighborhood of 70 cents compared to its war boom purchasing power of around forty cents. The salesmen don't seem to realize this. To them the dollar is the same old slippery article that it was in 1920, and when they begin to compare their 1920 earnings with 1921 earnings they think they make less money, when as a matter of fact, if the proposition is presented to them in the light of buying power, they are probably making as much if not more money than they did in boom times, based on what the money will buy.

Failure to understand this economic fundamental is also at the bottom of the complaints we hear from salesmen about prices not being in line. Sit in at any smoking compartment post-mortem on business conditions and you will surely find

some who contend that if their company would cut to 1914 prices all would be rosy. They never stop to think that, based on the buying power of the dollar, present prices may be considerably below 1914 levels!

The keep price competition which present market conditions are developing has brought with it a flood of merchandise of all kinds. This cheap merchandise, some of it being made here in this country but most of it of European origin, has forced many weak backed manufacturers and sellers to cut prices beyond a profit point. Already many business houses are on the brink of bankruptcy as a result. That is one reason why 1921 failures were over three times as great as they were the preceding year.

The man at the head of the business sees only two roads which he can follow—the road of the price cutter which leads to financial ruin; and the road of quality production and a quality price which will at least lay the foundation for bigger business in the years to come, even if it means a temporary loss of business to the price-cutters.

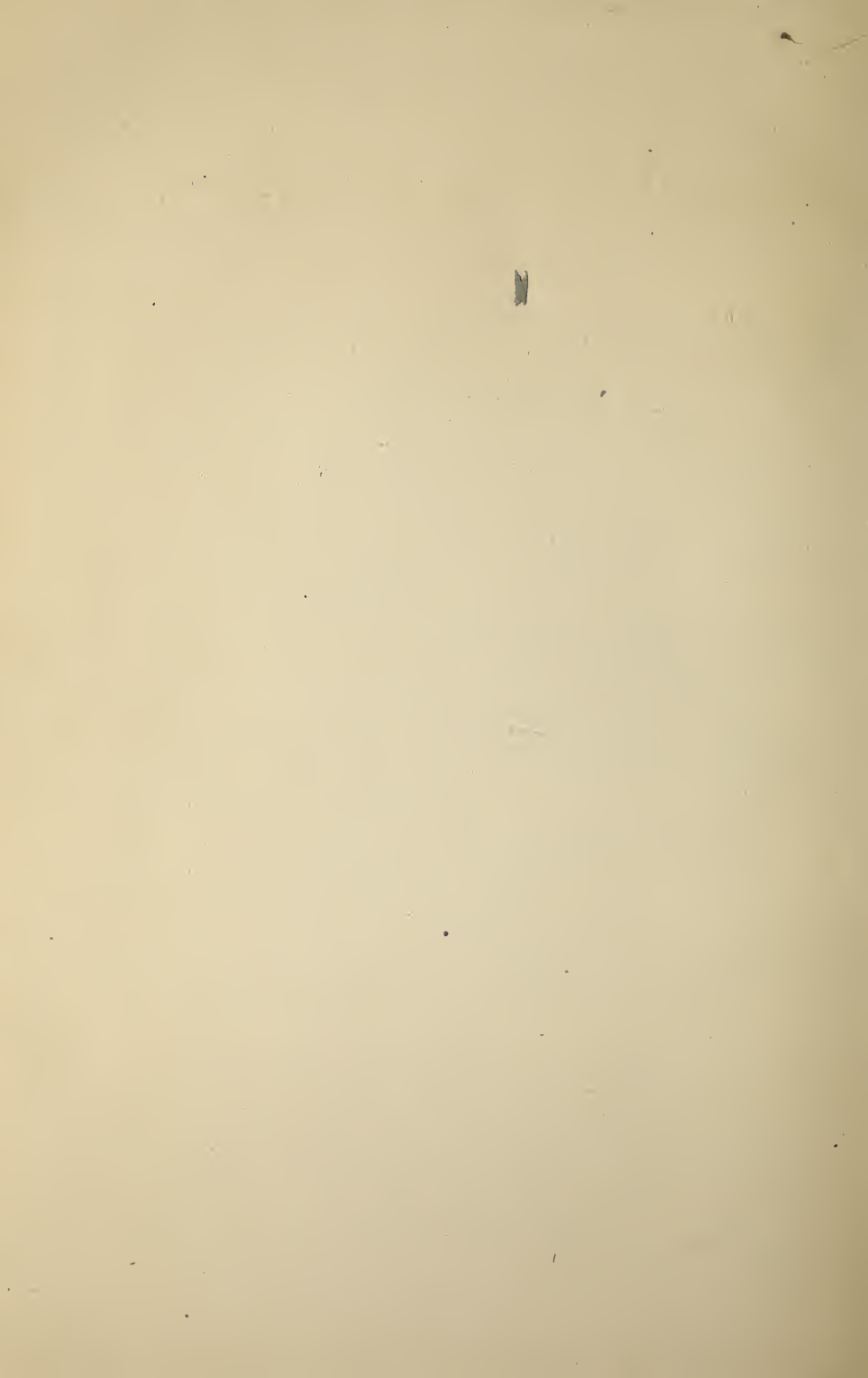
If you can get the salesman who wants lower prices to see this picture you will have just as strong an advocate for your quality policy in the field as you have in the office. The Dartnell salesman's manual "How to Sell Quality" is especially designed for that purpose and will prove most helpful in selling the quality idea to salesmen.

XVIII—Carelessness in Answering Correspondence

QUITE often you can convert the salesman who is irregular in answering your letters, and generally lax in routine matters, by turning the tables on him. Ask him to suppose with you for a minute. Ask him to suppose he had called on a very big customer and the customer had asked him for some information upon which the order hinged. The salesman was leaving town that night to keep an important engagement with a customer in the next town. He wired the house for an immediate reply. The sales manager received the wire, but he didn't feel in the mood just that minute to dictate a reply so he put it in his pocket and went out to lunch. When he came back from lunch a friend of his was waiting in the office so he didn't get a chance to send the answer that afternoon, and that evening he had an important engagement to play rummy with some of his friends. However, the next morning he remembered the telegram and sent the answer. In the meantime the customer had placed the order with another house. Ask the salesman how he would like to be treated that way, and how he would feel about it. Then remind him that your letters to him are just as important to you, as his letters to you are important to him, and you think it is a poor rule that doesn't work both ways.

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There are other salesmen's failings which could be covered in this report but these are the most common. While the methods suggested may not meet with your full approval, and may not be nearly so good as methods which you yourself use, we hope that you may get one or two helpful thoughts on this big problem of building men that will be useful.





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